

NORTHWEST HIGH INTENSITY DRUG TRAFFICKING AREA

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Prepared for the Committee on Government Reform
Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources

Testimony of Dave Rodriguez
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October 14, 2005

Chairman Souder, distinguished members of this committee, my name is Dave Rodriguez, and I have been the director of the Northwest HIDTA since June 1997. I first would like to thank the committee for its attention to exploring potential ways the federal government can partner with state and local law enforcement agencies in combating the continuing problems regarding methamphetamine abuse and trafficking in this region. Additionally, I wish to thank you for this opportunity for input from the Northwest HIDTA Program. The Northwest HIDTA Program began in January 1997 with the authorization for funding of seven counties, including King, Pierce, Skagit, Snohomish, Thurston, Whatcom, and Yakima. In September 2002, seven additional counties were authorized and subsequently added: Benton, Clark, Cowlitz, Franklin, Kitsap, Lewis, and Spokane. The Northwest HIDTA Executive Board consists of the following: Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives; Drug Enforcement Administration; Everett Police Department; Federal Bureau of Investigation; Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigation; King County Sheriff's Office; Seattle Police Department; Thurston County Sheriff's Office; U.S. Attorney's Office – Western District of Washington; U.S. Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement; U.S. Coast Guard – District 13; U.S. Marshal's Service – Western Washington; U.S. Secret Service; Washington State Patrol; Whatcom County Prosecutor's Office; and Yakima County Sheriff's Office.

The Northwest HIDTA fosters partnerships between law enforcement agencies, thereby increasing their cooperative effort within the region and with other HDTAs. At last count, the Northwest HIDTA has the participation of 392 task force officers and support staff representing 96 law enforcement agencies statewide. We emphasize information-sharing, case support, deconfliction practices, and training throughout the Northwest HIDTA region to protect our officers and citizens from the dangers of illicit drugs and associated crimes of violence.

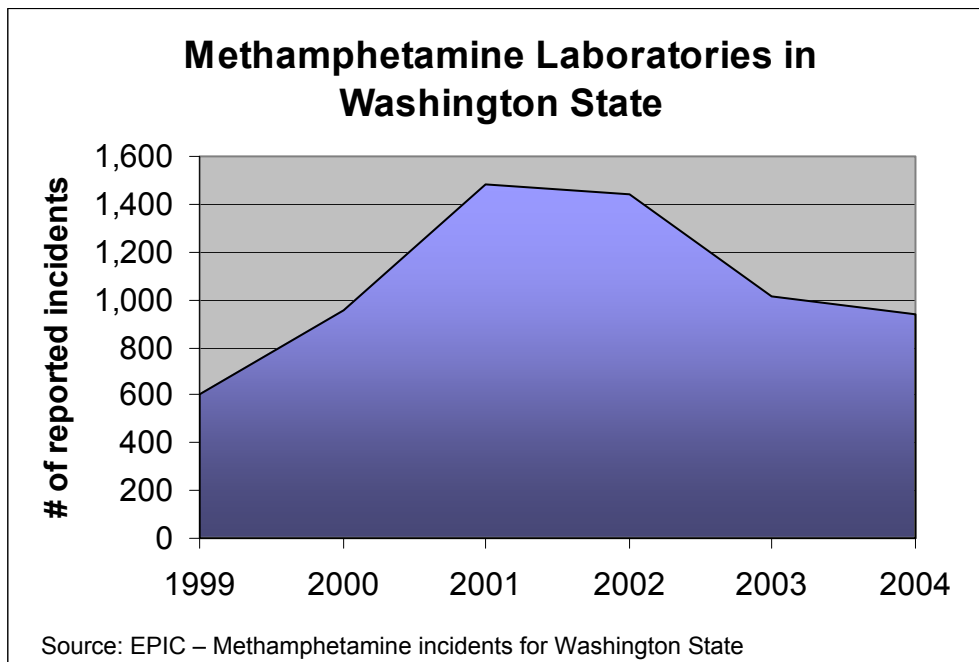
Methamphetamine Threat

U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales recently declared that, "in terms of damage to children and to our society, meth is now the most dangerous drug in America."

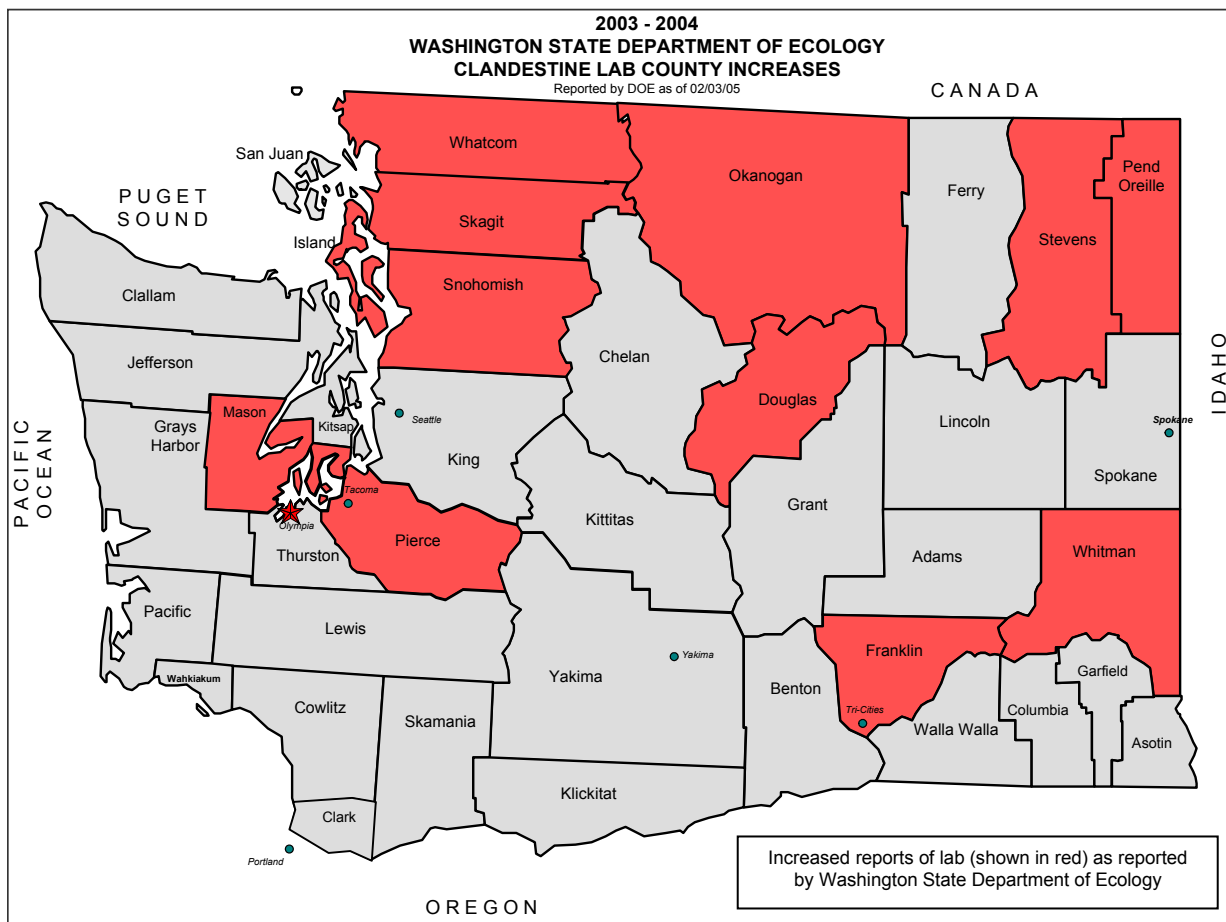
As a programmatic requirement, the Northwest HIDTA must continuously update the current drug threat and trend analysis to adapt and adjust the coordinated strategies of all multi-agency drug enforcement task forces supported by the HIDTA. A yearly Threat Assessment is developed and disseminated along with other reporting requirements. As indicated in the 2005 Northwest HIDTA Threat Assessment, methamphetamine availability, abuse, and production continues to pose a significant drug threat to Washington. Data from the National Drug Intelligence Center, obtained from the 2004 National Drug Threat Survey (NDTS), indicate that 91.1 percent of the State and local law enforcement agencies in Washington describe methamphetamine as the greatest drug threat in their area.

Production:

Methamphetamine production in Washington is a continuing problem, although laboratory-related seizure and incident data reflect a downward trend in production within the state in recent years. Nevertheless, NDTS 2004 data show that 85.1 percent of the State and local law enforcement respondents in Washington report the level of methamphetamine production as high or moderate in their jurisdictions. The number of reported methamphetamine laboratories in Washington began decreasing in 2002 when the state ranked 3rd nationally with 1,445 laboratory-related seizures as reported by the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC). Washington then dropped to 6th in the nation in 2003 with 928 seizures, and again ranked 6th in 2004 with 935 seizures (as of 4/7/05).



Data from the Washington State Department of Ecology (specific to data for the Tri-Cities area) shows that clandestine methamphetamine laboratory seizures decreased in 2004 for both Benton and Yakima counties, while laboratory seizures in Franklin County increased by one in 2004. Benton County ranked 5th (with 57 labs reported in 2004) in the State, while Franklin County ranked 15th (14 labs reported) and Yakima County ranked 22nd (7 labs reported). Pierce County continues to have the highest number of labs reported in Washington State with 541 labs reported in 2004, followed by King (199 labs reported) and Snohomish (101 labs reported) counties. The decline of reported methamphetamine production in Washington may reflect the impact of successful law enforcement efforts, increased community awareness, harsher sentencing for methamphetamine production offenses, increased difficulty in obtaining precursor chemicals due to legislative efforts, increased regulation of chemical manufacturers and distributors of precursor chemicals, increased availability of methamphetamine produced outside the state, and the Northwest HIDTA program and its partnerships. Trend analysis has indicated a moderate shift in incident locations—from the higher-population counties to the lower-population counties—representing a continuing movement of methamphetamine production operations to counties with less concentrated law enforcement resources.



The majority of methamphetamine laboratories in Washington are established in apartments, garages, motel rooms, and private residences as well as in mobile conveyances including stolen vehicles. Methamphetamine laboratories also are increasingly found on Washington State public lands such as national parks and national and state forests. Methamphetamine laboratories and their associated dumpsites pose a significant threat to public lands in Washington.

Methamphetamine production in any location poses serious safety and environmental concerns to Washington. The production process creates and introduces toxic and hazardous waste into the environment that endangers law enforcement personnel and emergency response teams, as well as adults and children visiting or residing in or near the homes of methamphetamine producers. Moreover, many of the precursor chemicals used in production are volatile and can be extremely dangerous if not handled properly. Children living in homes where methamphetamine laboratories exist are often affected by the caustic chemicals used for production and typically live in deplorable conditions. According to EPIC's Associated Children Report, of the 72 children affected by methamphetamine production in Washington in 2004, 63 were discovered to be present at a laboratory site and 11 were exposed to toxic chemicals.

Methamphetamine laboratories may contain a variety of highly flammable chemicals that produce five to seven pounds of toxic waste for every pound of methamphetamine

produced. Most of the toxic residue from methamphetamine production is dumped in the local area, often contaminating groundwater and killing vegetation. The cleanup of seized laboratories is costly and difficult because of the hazardous chemicals used in production, and chemical contamination is often detected at laboratory sites up to two years after methamphetamine production has ended.

The dangers associated with methamphetamine production are not limited to chemical toxicity; oftentimes individuals addicted to this dangerous drug are extremely violent. On March 17, 2005, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Task Force agents and officers in Yakima, WA conducted an undercover operation to buy one pound of methamphetamine "ice" from a male and female suspected of being drug traffickers. During the course of the arrest, agents and Task Force Officers were fired upon and were involved in a high-speed pursuit of the subject and a female associate. The subject jumped out of the vehicle in front of a convenience store where he had taken a female hostage and held her at gunpoint for about two hours. After throwing out a semi-automatic handgun and magazine, the subject released the hostage and surrendered himself to law enforcement officers. The subject was arrested and will be charged federally. The female associate was arrested earlier after having driven the subject's vehicle to another location.

Precursors:

Many chemicals and other precursors used in methamphetamine production can be purchased legally, or are stolen. Pseudoephedrine and ephedrine are the most commonly diverted precursor chemicals used in illicit drug production in Washington. NDTS 2004 data indicate that a significant majority of State and local law enforcement agencies in Washington report that pseudoephedrine and ephedrine are commonly diverted in or from their jurisdictions for use in the production of illicit drugs.

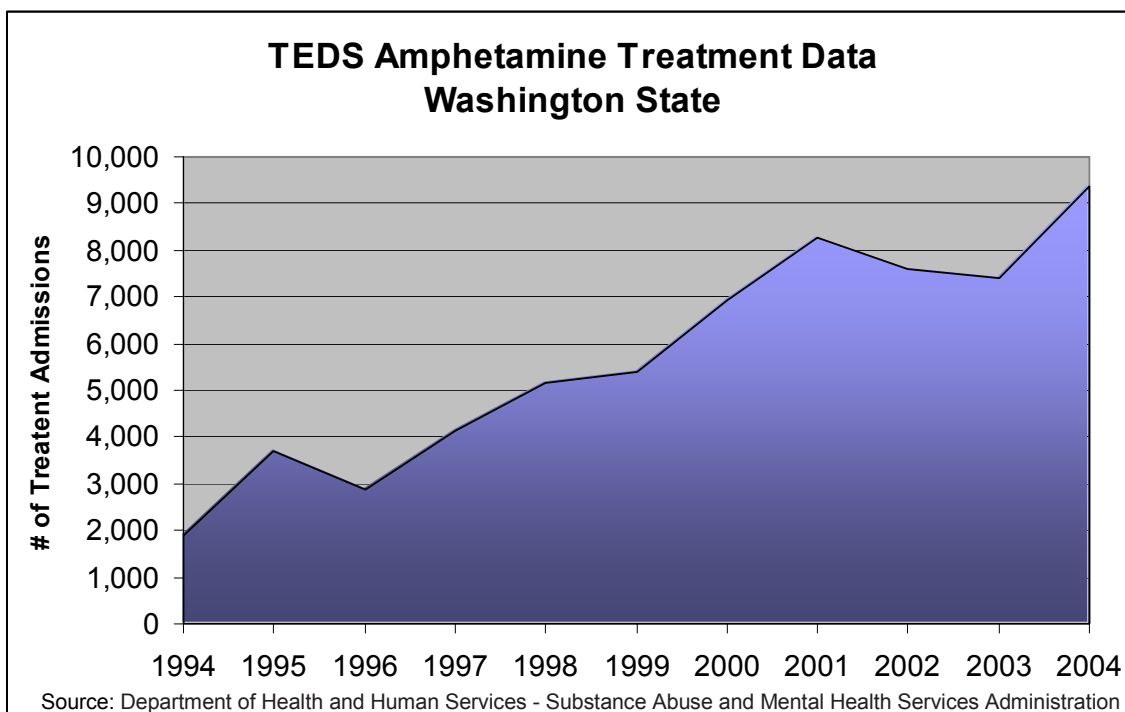
The diversion of methamphetamine precursors from Canada to the illicit market is a continuing problem. Although the movement of pseudoephedrine from Canada to the United States has decreased, increasing quantities of ephedrine are being smuggled across the U.S.-Canada border. Data reported for the western sector in Washington of the U.S.-Canada border (west of the Cascade Mountain Range) indicates that 1,462 lbs of ephedrine has been seized in CY 2005, representing a 48 percent increase from CY 2004, whereas no pseudoephedrine seizures were reported in CY 2004 or CY 2005. Intelligence indicates that ephedrine that is smuggled into the U.S. is intended for delivery to California based super-labs.

Not only are precursors being smuggling into the U.S. but there are increasing reports of methamphetamine laboratories in lower British Columbia. The most significant example was discovered in September 2005 in British Colombia, Canada. The Abbotsford Police Department Drug Unit, assisted by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Clandestine Lab Team and Health Canada chemists, dismantled the largest methamphetamine lab that a senior Health Canada chemist reported he had ever seen. This super-lab was contained in the garage and basement area of the residence and approximately \$2.5 million worth of methamphetamine was located and seized. It was estimated that the production capacity for this lab was 14 kg of methamphetamine produced every 24 hours.

Chemical reagents and solvents are commonly diverted for use in illicit drug production in Washington as well. According to NDTs 2004 data, 81.7 percent of State and local law enforcement agencies in Washington report that anhydrous ammonia is a commonly diverted solvent for use in illicit drug production in their jurisdictions, and 60.7 percent report that red phosphorous is a commonly diverted reagent. Methamphetamine laboratory operators have also continued the trend of producing their own anhydrous ammonia using ammonia sulfate, ammonia nitrate, and household lye. Other operators purchase anhydrous ammonia from agricultural supply stores and marinas or steal anhydrous ammonia from farmers in eastern Washington. Anhydrous ammonia theft has recently expanded to include fish packing plants along Washington's coast and in Puget Sound Ports. Lithium, another chemical used in methamphetamine production, often is extracted from batteries sold at many retail stores. Iodine is often purchased at local feed stores. An increasingly popular method of acquiring precursor chemicals in Washington is through Internet sales.

Abuse:

In spite of reports of a declining number of methamphetamine laboratories in Washington State, the level of methamphetamine abuse remains high. Data from the Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) indicates a significant increase in amphetamine-related treatment admissions in 2004 (9,356) ending the previous downward trend from a peak in 2001 (8,260).



Aggregate adult and youth methamphetamine-related treatment admissions (reported by the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse) have remained consistent for the Tri-Cities area. In State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2003, Yakima County ranked 7th (404 admissions), Benton County ranked 14th (167 admissions), and Franklin County ranked 21st (50 admissions). The most active counties for SFY 2003 were Pierce County (954 admissions), Spokane County (614), and Clark County (579 admissions).

According to the Community Epidemiology Work Group, the proportion of 24-Hour Alcohol and Drug Helpline calls remained consistent for methamphetamine-related calls from January 2001 through June of 2004. Approximately 20 percent of adult and 18 percent of youth calls (among those involving illicit drugs) were methamphetamine-related. Methamphetamine is the second most commonly mentioned illicit drug following marijuana for youth callers. For adults, methamphetamine-related calls are less common than those regarding cocaine, similar to marijuana and more common than heroin.

In 2004 the Pediatric Interim Care Center, a non-profit organization that provides interim care for drug affected infants born in Washington, reported that 49 newborns suffered from the effects of prenatal exposure to amphetamines. This number surpassed the number of infants admitted who suffered from the effects of cocaine (34), opiates (32), cocaine and opiates in combination (18), and psychotropic medications (2). An additional 14 infants were admitted who had been exposed to a combination of amphetamines and cocaine or opiates.

The percentage of Federal drug sentences that were methamphetamine-related in Washington was higher than the national average in FY 2002. United States Sentencing Commission (USSC) data indicate that 32.4 percent of Federal drug sentences in Washington were methamphetamine-related (up from 31.5 percent in FY 2001) compared with 15.5 percent nationally in FY 2002. The percent of Federal methamphetamine-related drug sentences for the Western District of Washington was 29.5 percent in FY 2002, while accounting for 37.6 percent in the Eastern District. (FY 2002 is the most current USSC data available.)

Availability:

High purity, low cost methamphetamine is readily available throughout Washington. NDTs 2004 data show that 98.0 percent of the State and local law enforcement agencies in Washington described methamphetamine availability as high or moderate in their jurisdictions. The availability and demand for crystal methamphetamine is also increasing throughout Washington. As efforts to combat methamphetamine have increased, production operations have shifted to areas with fewer resources dedicated to combating methamphetamine. High demand has attracted the importation of methamphetamine from other areas, potentially including more rural areas of Washington and other states.

Most of the methamphetamine available in Washington is produced in large-scale, super-labs primarily located in Mexico and California. Decreasing super lab seizures in

the U.S. coupled with increasing methamphetamine seizures along the Southwest Border could indicate that methamphetamine super-labs are being relocated to Mexico. Methamphetamine produced locally in Washington by Caucasian criminal groups or independent operators also is available, but to a lesser extent. Crystal methamphetamine, a highly pure and addictive form of the drug known as “ice,” has become increasingly available in Washington.

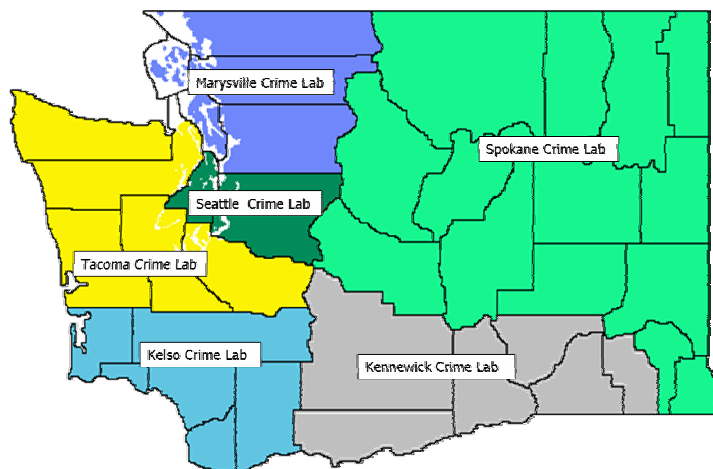
The Federal-wide Drug Seizure System (FDSS) data indicate that the amount of methamphetamine seized by Federal law enforcement officials in Washington increased overall from 48.3 kilograms in CY 1999 to 206 kilograms in CY 2003, but then decreased to 75 kilograms in CY 2004. FDSS data also indicate that Washington ranked 6th in the nation (based on weight) for Federal seizures of methamphetamine in CY 2004, down from 4th in CY 2003.

Data obtained from the Washington State Patrol Crime Laboratories indicate that methamphetamine availability continues to increase. In 2004, the state average for laboratory submissions that tested positive for methamphetamine was over 50 percent of the total exhibits analyzed.



INVESTIGATIVE ASSISTANCE DIVISION
Regional Drug Trends by Laboratory Submissions
2004 Statistics compiled by the Washington State Patrol Crime Laboratory and the Investigative Assistance Division

Drugs	Seattle Crime Lab	Tacoma Crime Lab	Kelso Crime Lab	Kennewick Crime Lab	Spokane Crime Lab	Marysville Crime Lab
Meth	37.2%	55.6%	81.3%	54.4%	59.9%	34.8%
Cocaine	45.0%	17.8%	6.2%	23.1%	28.5%	22.3%
Heroin	5.6%	6.8%	6.4%	3.8%	3.1%	6.0%
Oxycodone	1.8%	0.8%	0.9%	1.0%	1.7%	2.2%
Marijuana	18.8%	23.0%	5.0%	30.2%	25.1%	13.2%
PCP/LSD	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
MDA/MDMA	1.5%	0.6%	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%	0.8%
Submissions	3,068	1,980	2,159	2,271	2,008	3,177



One strong indicator of availability is the price and purity of methamphetamine available in Washington. The price of methamphetamine in Washington varies depending on type, location, level of distribution, and the ethnicity of the seller and the buyer. Overall prices have not significantly changed and purity levels have increased in the region, another indication that availability remains high. Respondents to the 2005 Northwest HIDTA Threat Assessment Survey reported that wholesale quantities of powdered methamphetamine sold for an average price of over \$16,000 per kilogram and approximately \$7,000 per pound, while retail quantities sold on average for nearly \$650 per ounce and nearly \$60 per gram. Respondents to the 2005 Northwest HIDTA Threat Assessment Survey reported that wholesale quantities of crystal methamphetamine sold for an average price of over \$23,000 per kilogram and approximately \$11,000 per pound, while retail quantities sold on average for \$1,000 per ounce and over \$90 per gram. Methamphetamine purity levels in Washington increased during FY 2004. According to the DEA Seattle Field Division, the overall purity of ounce quantities of methamphetamine seized and tested in Washington during FY 2004 averaged nearly 68 percent, reflecting an increase from the 45 percent average purity reported in 2003.

Related Crime:

Although the use of methamphetamines is itself a crime, there are several other crimes that have been increasing because of the prolific use of this drug. There is a strong correlation within areas with high levels of methamphetamine abuse with increased levels of identity theft, auto theft, burglary, assaults, and domestic violence. To better understand the extent of the problem, the National Association of Counties (NACo) recently conducted surveys of law enforcement and county child welfare officials in order to determine the impact of methamphetamine on these county services and their communities. Washington State respondents indicated that domestic violence (81.8% of respondents), assault (73% of respondents), robbery/burglary (100% of respondents), and identity theft (100% of respondents) has increased in their counties as a direct result of methamphetamine. Out of the 11 respondents to the NACo survey from Washington State, 100 percent reported that arrests where methamphetamine was involved have increased in the last 5 years (also in the last 3 years) and 7 (64%) reported that arrests have continued to increase in the last year. All of those surveyed in Washington State indicated that the use of methamphetamine in their county has lead to increased workloads for public safety staff.

The Federal Trade Commission reports that in 2004, Washington State ranked 8th in the nation (as ranked per 100,000 of the population) for identity theft victims. There were a total of 5,654 identity theft victims, equating to 91.1 victims per 100,000 population, reported for Washington State in 2004. The top cities in terms of number of victims were Seattle (753), Vancouver (329), Tacoma (326), Spokane (240), and Bellevue (141).

Response to the Threat

Intelligence:

A major function of the Northwest HIDTA is to provide both operational and strategic intelligence in the form of analytical case support, deconfliction, and strategic assessments. The Northwest HIDTA Threat Assessment is used by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies and programs for strategic development and is the most comprehensive document available for information regarding the drug threat to Washington State. Another strategic project was completed for the geographical target area of "White Center" located in the Seattle-King County area. As part of the Office of National Drug Control Policy's 25-Cities Initiative, this report assisted law enforcement efforts by identifying the methamphetamine threat. The trend and predictive analysis for this project allowed law enforcement to respond to street gangs primarily involved in sale of methamphetamine in the community. Crime statistics analyzed one year after the initiative showed a significant reduction in not only drug sales but also other felony offenses such as burglary, robbery, assaults in the area and a shift of activity to outlying areas. The Northwest HIDTA Investigative Support Center also coordinates efforts with law enforcement agencies in the state for clandestine lab reporting to EPIC. Other intelligence operations include the Meth Hotline, funded and operated by the Northwest HIDTA, which has allowed citizens to assist law enforcement efforts regarding methamphetamine investigations. In 2004, 172 intelligence leads were provided to the HIDTA Investigative Support Center.

Operational / Enforcement:

The Northwest HIDTA Border Initiative has impacted the route of entry for methamphetamine precursors entering the state from Canada. Precursors are therefore increasingly being seized on maritime routes, in eastern portions of Washington and also in other states. One major pseudoephedrine seizure in recent years resulted in the indictment of eight individuals in March 2004 for 'Conspiracy to Import' 540 pounds of pseudoephedrine into the United States from Canada in July 2003. The pseudoephedrine was destined for a super-lab in the Yakima, WA area. This investigation also identified smuggling methods and routes utilized to transport pseudoephedrine, methamphetamine and currency across the U.S./Canada border.

All of the Northwest HIDTA initiatives have a methamphetamine component and one, the Washington State Patrol Pro-Active Meth Team initiative that provides crucial clan lab and investigative support to all counties (including the Tri-Cities area) that are unable to afford personnel and specialized training to respond to clan labs, is solely dedicated to methamphetamine.

As the methamphetamine threat from clan labs has declined the transportation of methamphetamine from other states has increased. The Northwest HIDTA has quickly established a new initiative to interdict drug traffic on the roadways. The Pacific Northwest Highway Interdiction Program will be an effective tool aimed toward the disruption of drug transportation and the distribution elements of drug trafficking organizations. The Washington State Patrol is the lead agency for this initiative. This

initiative outlines a vast operational area, which encompasses the major highway corridors used for the transportation of drugs not only in Washington State but also in the Pacific Northwest region of the U.S. to include Idaho, Montana, and Oregon.

As an example of the importance of interdiction operations, on February 13, 2005, twenty-four suspects were arrested for conspiracy and possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine and cocaine within the United States. This was the result of two and a half years of multi-agency cooperation to investigate a significant drug trafficking organization involved in bringing large quantities of methamphetamine and cocaine from Mexico through the Tri-Cities to the greater Spokane area, and then distributing these drugs to customers throughout the northwest. Agents and officers obtained ten federal search warrants for residences in Spokane and Franklin Counties, as well as Washington County and Kootenai County, Idaho. During the investigation, execution of search warrants and other enforcement operations, agents and officers seized 10 pounds of methamphetamine, 8 pounds of cocaine, one semi-automatic handgun, ten vehicles, and approximately \$60,000 in U.S. currency. Also, agents and officers were able to establish a direct link between this criminal organization and drug traffickers operating from Mexico.

The 2005 Northwest HIDTA Threat Assessment Survey identified 213 Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTO) in CY 2004, with 135 reported by Northwest HIDTA initiatives. Of these, (including DTOs reported by Northwest HIDTA initiatives and Byrne Grant Task Forces) 39 involved only methamphetamine distribution and 85 involved poly-drug distribution which included methamphetamine.

Precursor / Chemical Control:

Another crucial element in combating the methamphetamine threat is the control of production precursors. The Northwest HIDTA participates in the National Methamphetamine Chemicals Initiative and has also been a key participant in the Clandestine Lab Working Group since 1998. The Clandestine Lab Working Group is a coalition of law enforcement, Washington State Department of Ecology, Washington State Department of Health, prosecutors, and licensed contractors for meth lab and dumpsite cleanup that have come together to identify strategies to combat the methamphetamine problem in Washington State. This group and other allied county groups (many organized by the Northwest HIDTA) have been a force in establishing state legislation to increase sentencing for meth cooks, protect Drug Endangered Children, and establish regulations to limit over the counter purchases of pseudoephedrine. The Northwest HIDTA is one of several sponsors of the annual State Meth Summit and is represented on the Governor's Meth Coordinating Committee.

Additionally the Northwest HIDTA sponsors task forces and community-based 'Meth Action Teams' which have established alliances with businesses that sell products containing the ingredients used in the illicit production of methamphetamine to identify pseudoephedrine 'smurfing' efforts. All 39 Washington State counties have implemented citizen-based, interdisciplinary Meth Action Teams and 26 counties have implemented the Washington Meth Watch Retailers' Program. The Washington Meth Watch Retailers' program – a companion element to the Washington Meth Watch Public

Education program – generated nearly 75 percent of the investigative tips received and led to over 50 percent of the meth lab search warrants executed by the Spokane County Meth Lab Team in 2003 and 2004.

Pseudoephedrine transportation from Canada to the United State has decreased, although the amount of ephedrine imported from Canada has increased. The decrease in pseudoephedrine diversion into Washington is due to the Canadian government placing controls on precursor sales in January 2003, enforcement action taken on chemical manufacturers as a result of the DEA / Royal Canadian Mounted Police “Operation Northern Star” (in which the Northwest HIDTA Investigative Support Center provided significant analytical support), and the Northwest HIDTA Border Initiative.

There have been a series of precursor laws executed in the state of Washington since 2001 that have incrementally addressed those issues. Some of the laws include:

House Bill 1370, effective, July 22, 2001, which provided reporting and record keeping requirements for the sale of precursor drugs and made selling or possessing certain amounts of ephedrine, pseudoephedrine or phenylpropanolamine a gross misdemeanor. The effect of this law has been to curb the sale of the precursors from retail establishments in wholesale amounts to individuals who use the precursors to manufacture Meth and to provide record keeping for regulators and law enforcement agencies that can be used for enforcement purposes.

State Senate Bill 6478, is follow-on legislation that became effective July 1, 2004, and further increases record keeping responsibilities, puts stricter limits on retailers who sell medications without registering with the state and limits the selling of such ingredients to 10 percent of the retailer’s total sales. This legislation was developed as a result of suspicious transaction reports disclosing that the sales of precursors by 380 convenience stores in the state appeared to be greatly exceeding the demand for cold remedies.

House Bill 2266, which will become fully effective January 1, 2006, will further restrict access to certain precursor drugs used to manufacture methamphetamine to ensure that they are only sold at retail to individuals upon production of proper identification who will use them for legitimate purposes. Part of this legislation became effective October 1, 2005 and mandated that any product containing any detectable quantity of ephedrine, pseudoephedrine, or phenylpropanolamine, or their salts, isomers, or salts of isomers, be kept in a location not directly accessible by customers.

Other legislation that was passed included a law effective March 26, 2002, that increased the penalty for the theft of Anhydrous Ammonia stolen from various commercial sites and farms where it is used. Sentencing reform legislation was passed and became effective July 1, 2004, that increased the sentencing for endangered children found on the premises where methamphetamine or precursors were present. Additionally, there is legislation being sponsored to increase the penalties for manufacturing methamphetamine cooks from 10 to 20 years.

Since many of these laws and their vigorous enforcement had the effect of causing methamphetamine manufacturers to seek other sources for precursors, the laws in place in surrounding states and Canada have had a direct impact on the availability of precursors in the state of Washington. It was noticed as the state laws tightened, more precursors began to flow in from Canada and outlying states. In 2002, the Canadian government created the Precursor Control Regulation under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to establish a regulatory framework for Canada to address domestic and international concerns in controlling precursors. The intent of the phased-in regulation is to reduce diversion, deny criminal organizations the ability to legally purchase these chemicals, increase public safety, and reduce risks and harm to the environment.

Another example of the effect legislation and enforcement can have on the acquisition of precursors involves reports that there has been a dramatic increase of customers from Oregon purchasing tincture of iodine and methsulfonylethamphetamine (MSM) at feed and tack stores in southwest Washington. The state of Oregon's precursor substance law (effective January 1, 2002) established restrictions on the most commonly used precursors/chemicals for methamphetamine production including iodine and MSM (not currently identified in State of Washington legislation).

Training:

The Northwest HIDTA sponsors free training to law enforcement personnel responding to and investigating clandestine methamphetamine labs. Many of 126 law enforcement officers who received this training in 2004 came from agencies that would not otherwise be able afford it. The importance of this training not only pertains to enforcement but is extremely important for the safety of those who might come into contact with the dangerous chemicals involved with methamphetamine production. In addition, most of the Northwest HIDTA law enforcement initiatives have a methamphetamine awareness-training component to familiarize businesses, government, and community groups with indicators of methamphetamine production and abuse. As an example, the Washington State Patrol Pro-Active Meth Team provided methamphetamine awareness classes to 2,225 individuals in 2004.

Community Education:

In 1999, the Northwest HIDTA Prevention/Treatment Initiative implemented the Project Safe Areas for Everyone (S.A.F.E.) Methamphetamine Public Education curriculum in partnership with the Thurston County Meth Action Team. The curriculum was updated as the Washington Meth Watch Public Education curriculum in 2003 and, in partnership with the Spokane County Meth Action Team, over 200 citizens (representing 29 counties) have been trained to provide Meth Watch presentations. In 2004, this Citizens' Speakers Bureau provided 81 presentations to 3,166 attendees.

Other related Northwest HIDTA activities have included the placement of meth education messages on billboards, buses, TV and radio, and in movie theaters. Over 53,500 pieces of print and electronic meth education materials were distributed throughout the Northwest HIDTA region in 2004, and the "M-Files" website (www.mfiles.org) received over 2,000,000 hits and 80,000 visitors.

Recommendations

In order to continue to combat the methamphetamine threat it is imperative to:

- ***Continue to fund and provide training such as the Clan-Lab awareness and recognition.***
- ***Continue to provide demand reduction programs and public awareness campaigns.***
- ***Continue to support and fully fund the Byrne Grant Task Force and HIDTA programs.***
- ***Increase interdiction efforts through the continued funding of the Pacific Northwest Highway Interdiction Program and other similar efforts.***
- ***Continue interdiction vigilance at the northern border through continued cooperation of U.S. and Canadian law enforcement.***
- ***Engage both the Canadian and Mexican governments to reduce the availability of methamphetamine precursors and enhance efforts to reduce production and transportation of methamphetamine into the U.S.***
- ***Reduce the availability of chemical precursors purchased via the internet.***